

**INFORMATION FOR SOCCER SEASON 2003 REGARDING CHILD PROTECTION**

TO: Granville Association, Greystanes Soccer Club and all NSWASF Clubs and Associations  
 FROM: Michelle Haigh - State Child Protection Officer, NSW Amateur Soccer Federation  
 RE: Response to concerns by Clubs re Child Protection

---

Firstly I am pleased to hear that club committee members are attending the Department of Sport & Recreation Child Protection presentations. These seminars at least give you an idea of what the current Child Protection legislative requirements are.

The reason that some of the information given at these seminars differs with the NSWASF guidelines is that DS&R have to give a talk which covers all sports which all have different structures. Therefore the seminar is very generalised to ensure that it covers all legislative requirements.

As a member of the DS&R Child Protection consulting committee I can assure you that the DS&R are well aware of how we are coordinating Child Protection. They have endorsed our guidelines and the DS&R committee is putting together a "GUIDELINES FOR CLUBS" for distribution early next year which is based on the NSWASF structure.

I have copied all NSWASF clubs and Associations into this email as I believe many of the questions posed by Greystanes Soccer Club are typical of those which our other club members would like answers to.

The following questions were submitted by the Greystanes Soccer Club who recently attended a DS&R Child Protection Seminar:

**1. Child Protection Policy**

Q. We were told to distribute our Child Protection Policy to all of our members.  
 What Policy can Clubs use to distribute to members?

The NSWASF has a Child Protection policy which is effective throughout the entire organisation including clubs.

A copy of the policy is attached to this email and can also be found in the *Association Child Protection Guidelines* booklet and on the official NSWASF website [www.nswasf.com.au](http://www.nswasf.com.au).

Clubs can print this Policy and distribute as required.

**2. Child Protection Officer**

Q. Does a club have to appoint a Child Protection Officer?

We have not encouraged the appointment of a separate Child Protection Officer at club level as the Secretary in most cases is able to handle all Child Protection matters. If your club appoints your Secretary as the Child Protection Officer, please ensure that all members are aware of this.

If a club however feels that the size of their club warrants the appointment of a Child Protection officer then we would support this decision.

**3. Effectiveness of the Association Child Protection Guidelines**

Q. At the talk we were given the impression that the club is entirely responsible for everything within the legislation.

Do the NSWASF Child Protection Guidelines negate some legislative responsibilities of clubs?

Yes, the Guidelines as distributed by the NSWASF do negate some of the responsibilities of clubs.

The DS&R are aware of how the NSWASF is coordinating Child Protection but leave it up to us to inform the clubs of their responsibilities.

**Q. Why is the NSWASF different to other sporting organisations?**

The legislation requires that the 'Sporting Organisation' undertake the responsibilities of the legislative requirements.

Because the NSWASF is the largest sporting organisation in Australia and we have an extremely effective structure in place and the existing structure enables us to be able to relieve our clubs of some of the responsibilities.

**Q. Why don't Clubs handle investigations into child related allegations?**

Well firstly our clubs are busy enough just running soccer.

Additionally, we have existing P&DC and other committees at Association level who are capable of investigating a child related allegation and ensuring that it is not frivolous, misconceived, false or untrue. Some of our clubs are only small and in some cases are managed by members of the same family or families and there is no way of ensuring an unbiased determination.

#### **4. Protection for Adults**

**Q. There doesn't appear to be any protection for the adults ie. coaches and managers?**

Yes I agree, there should be protection for adults and the DS&R Advisory Committee is looking at changing the name of the CPO to Member Protection Officer (MPO) for that reason. There is always the opportunity for a child to use an allegation against an adult as a tool to get the adult into trouble and it is also for this reason that investigations into these matters are handled at Association level by persons who can take this into consideration. In all child related cases consideration is given to the alleged victim and the alleged offender and all child related matters are treated as strictly confidential.

#### **5. Disruptive Players**

**Q. What happens if we have a disruptive child player?**

Every child related matter is different and mishandling a disruptive child can often contribute to a child related allegation.

If the child becomes upset or hurt then they may feel as though they have been abused. Officials should simply not get themselves into these situations. All officials must be aware that ongoing inappropriate verbal abuse of a child can be deemed as child abuse. In addition, the inappropriate handling of a child (eg. pushing, pulling, shoving, hitting, smacking or any inappropriate physical handling) is deemed to be child abuse.

Coaches, Managers and all club officials should ensure that there is never any inappropriate handling or treatment of children.

**Q. How old is a child?**

A child is any person under the age of 18 years.

#### **6. Parents Responsibilities**

**Q. Is the coach responsible for the child?**

Yes in this world of litigation the coach is in most cases deemed to be responsible for the child while in his care. However, to reduce risk many clubs are now insisting that a parent either attends training and the game or ensures that another parent is in attendance to oversee the child. Clubs should make this clear to all parents at time of registration.

**Q. What if a coach is left alone at the end of training with one child?**

These days this should never be allowed to happen. Clubs must insist that parents arrive at least 10 minutes before the end of training or the end of the game if they are not able to attend. Some clubs are asking parents to sign an agreement at time of registration to ensure they collect their children on time.

However, if a coach is put in this situation then the coach should ask another parent or official to stay with him until the last child is collected.

The coach should never ever offer to drive the child home or take the child to his or her home to be collected later!

These situations could easily result in a true or false allegation occurring.

**7. Abuse of a child at home****Q. What do we do if we think a child is being abused at home or a child tells us he/she is being abuse at home?**

Coaches and managers are not trained in this sort of thing.

Evidence shows that school teachers, sports coaches and close friends are the people who notice these things and are the people that children feel comfortable telling these things to. If this happens, you listen carefully, don't immediately dismiss it, it might have taken the child months to build up the courage to say something to someone, you may be their last resort. If this happens, write down your concerns and supporting evidence ie. what the child told you, constant bruises, upset child, broken bones and give this document to your club secretary for onforwarding to the Association Child Protection Officer. The State Child Protection Officer will forward the information to the appropriate authorities. We have not had an occurrence of this type yet, but it can happen.

**8. Club responsibilities?****Q. So what are clubs responsible for?**

In brief clubs are responsible for:

1. Ensuring that every club official signs a Prohibited Employment Declaration before taking up their position. (Form attached). This includes; Coaches, Managers, Committee members, Canteen managers, guest coaches and any other person directly in charge of children.
2. Ensuring that any allegation of child abuse or a child related matter is reported to the Association Child Protection Officer.
3. Ensuring that all club members are aware of the NSWASF Child Proteciton Policy (As Attached).
4. Ensuring that all club officials are aware of what is and isn't acceptable behaviour when in charge of children.
5. Reporting to Association CPO any suspicions or reports of abuse towards a child by another person or party.

The registering of the organisation, the investigation of child abuse allegations and the completion of other necessary documentation is the responsibility of the Association CPO and the State CPO.

**9. PED Declarations****Q. What is a Prohibited Employment Declaration?**

This is a statement declaring that the person signing has not been found guilty of committing a child related offence or similar offence which puts the safety of children at risk.

It must be signed by all club officials and persons directly in charge of children.

If a person refuses to sign the declaration then they are not permitted to take up the position within the club.

If a person has signed another declaration in another sport or employment the they are still required to fill one our for the club.

There are no exceptions for completing a PED form.

These forms MUST be forwarded by the club to the Association for secure storage, there are no exceptions here either.

A copy of the PED Declaration is attached and is also available on the NSWASF website [www.nswasf.com.au](http://www.nswasf.com.au)

#### **10. Involving other Government Departments**

Does the club involve DOCS or other Government departments when child related matters occur?

DOCS (Department of Community Services) only become involved when requested to do so by the Police, Department of Sport and Recreation (the official Child Protection Screening agency for Sporting Organisations), the Commission for Children and Young People or the parent of a child. DOCS regulations and definitions of child abuse differ to those of the Child Protection Legislation. The Police should be called if a club is concerned for the immediate safety of any child or person.

Thank you once again to Granville Association and Greystanes Soccer Club for providing the above questions.

I trust this information will be of assistance, however should any clubs require further information regarding Child Protection you may visit the NSWASF website [www.nswasf.com.au](http://www.nswasf.com.au) or contact your Association Child Protection Officer or Association Secretary or the NSWASF State Child Protection Officer.

#### **State CPO Contact Information**

Phone: REDACTED (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Mobile: REDACTED

Email: REDACTED

Regards,  
Michelle Haigh  
State Child Protection Officer  
NSW Amateur Soccer Federation